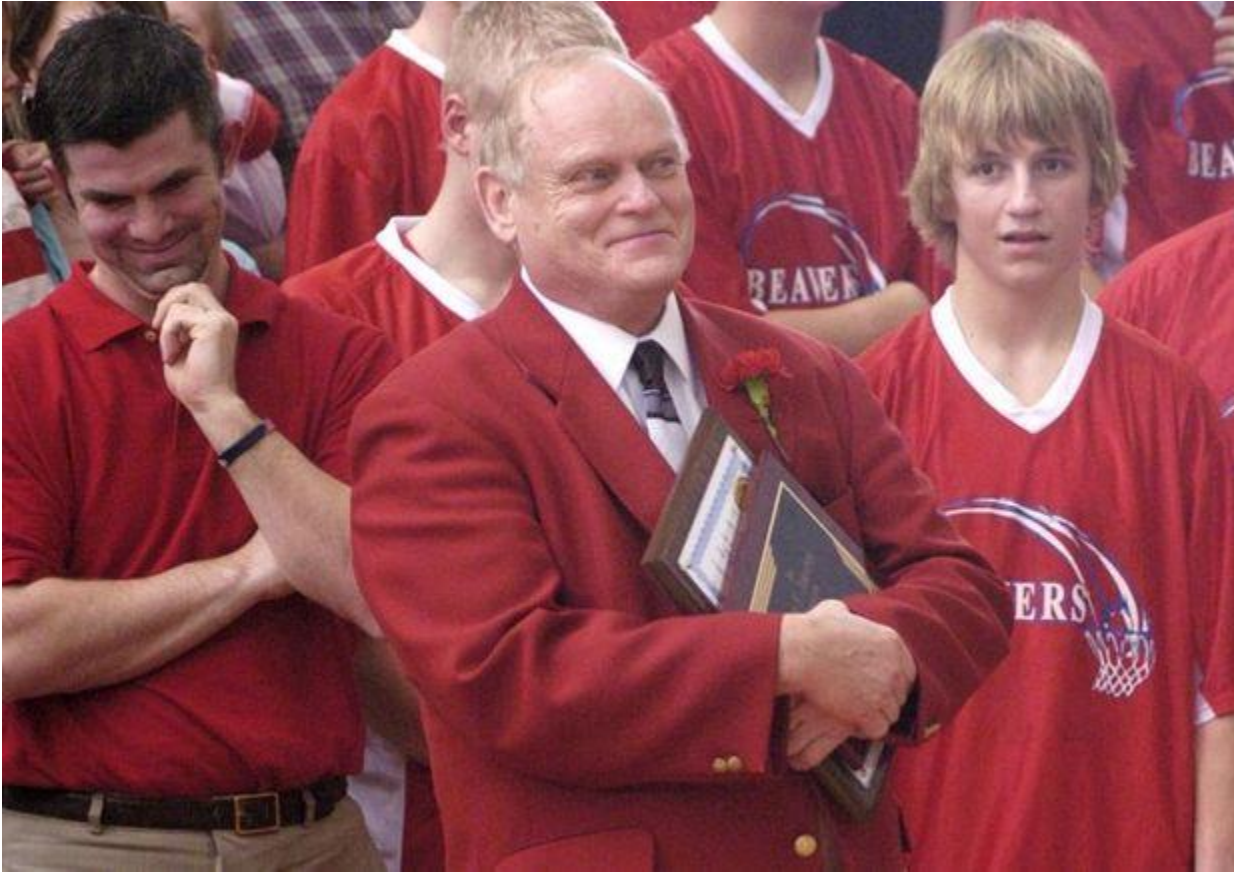


MLive Bay City Slam Dunk: No. 1 for the first time, Beaverton is the capital of basketball country



Roy Johnston has his Beaverton boys basketball team sitting at No. 1 in the state for the first time in his 42 seasons at the helm. (Dan Staudacher | MLive.com file)

By Lee Thompson | The Bay City Times

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MLIVE BAY CITY SLAM DUNK

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Part of the weekly MLive Bay City Slam Dunk package, which looks at highlights, trends, topics and top performers from the past week of high school boys and girls basketball. Click on the links to the right to view more Slam Dunk coverage.

BEAVERTON, MI – Beaverton isn't easily spotted on a map.

But it's starting to stand out as the heart of basketball country.

The boys basketball team is off to a 9-0 start and, after back-to-back 20-win seasons, the rest of the state can't help but take note. The Beavers have long been a highly-respected program, but now they are the No. 1-ranked Class C team in Michigan – a first under 42nd-year head coach Roy Johnston.

“It's a lot better if you're there when the season is over, but we'll enjoy it whenever we can,” Johnston said. “I told the boys that being up there means that everybody in the world is going to play their best game against us now, and we'd better be ready for it.”

That part is nothing new for **Beaverton**. Johnston's program is the Jack Pine Conference's most tradition-rich. Since taking the helm in 1974, he's seen the Beavers prevail 665 times, capture 18 league championships, 13 district titles and five regionals.

Beaverton is always a marked team. But being public enemy No. 1 is something new.

On a team that features Spencer Johnston and Carter Johnston – two of Roy's grandsons – along with go-getters like Hogan Hayes, Braeden Wolfe, Ronnie Remer and Ryan Duvall, the Beavers are attempting to make a unique imprint.

The 1998 and 2002 teams went undefeated in the regular season and the 1984 team rolled to a program-best state semifinal appearance. And those are goals that seem within reach midway through 2015, if a No. 1 ranking is any indication.

“You have to have some good ballplayers to get you there, to that level of recognition,” Johnston said. “When I have time to reflect, it's going to be nice to look back and know that I've coached my kids, my grandkids and all the good ballplayers I've had over the years.”

And if the perfect run of the boys basketball team isn't enough to underscore the passion for the game in the Gladwin County community, look a little closer. The girls basketball team sits alone atop the JPC as well with a 9-1 record.

And the student section is currently the runaway vote leader in **MLive's statewide poll**, trying to find the best basketball fans in the state.

There's plenty to cheer about in Beaverton this season, more than enough to make this basketball town leap off the map.

Lee Thompson covers local sports for MLive.com and The Bay City Times. Follow him on Twitter: [@LeeTsports](#)